

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00
SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03
PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 ACDA-12 IO-13 HA-05
OMB-01 /079 W
-----108182 101949Z /41

O 101845Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 019
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMCONSUL BELFAST

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 DUBLIN 0072

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: PINT, EI, UK
SUBJECT: LYNCH'S STATEMENTS ON NORTHERN IRELAND

REF: (A) DUBLIN 58; (B) LONDON 372 (C) BELFAST 4 (D) DUBLIN 70

SUMMARY: THE FURORE CAUSED BY PM LYNCH'S JANUARY 8 RADIO

REMARKS ON NORTHERN IRELAND CONTINUES. BOTH OPPOSITION PARTIES
HAVE ATTACKED LYNCH. THE DIPLOMATS ARE TRYING TO DAMP DOWN
THE SITUATION, BUT AS YET WE DO NOT KNOW HOW THE IRISH CABINET
WILL REACT. WE BELIEVE THE REMARKS WERE SOMEWHAT INADVERTENT AND
NOT A PLANNED CHANGE IN POLICY, BUT NOW THAT THE DEED IS DONE THE
GOI CANNOT FEASIBLY ERASE THE REMARKS. LYNCH SEEMS TO BE RECEIVING
PUBLIC SUPPORT SO FAR. END SUMMARY

1. PRIME MINISTER LYNCH'S SUNDAY INTERVIEW IS CAUSING CONSIDER-
ABLE FURORE HERE, AND IS THE MAJOR SUBJECT OF TODAY'S CABINET
MEETING. OPPOSITION FINE GAEL LEADER GARRET FITZGERALD STRONGLY
ATTACKED LYNCH FOR HIS STATEMENTS ON A POSSIBLE AMNESTY: "A
STATEMENT OF THIS KIND CAN ALL TOO EASILY BE INTERPRETED AS A
LICENSE TO COMMIT FURTHER CRIMES OF ARMED ROBBERY WITH IMPUNITY."
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FITZGERALD DID NOT COMMENT ON LYNCH'S REMARKS ON POWER-SHARING OR
A BRITISH WITHDRAWAL. LABOR PARTY LEADER FRANK CLUSKEY ALSO
ATTACKED THE REMARKS ON AMNESTY.

2. MFA ASSISTANT SECRETARY SEAN DONLON, IN CHARGE OF ANGLO-
IRISH AFFAIRS, TOLD US IN STRICT CONFIDENCE (PORTECT) THAT HE
WAS DRAFTING A STATEMENT FOR THE CABINET'S CONSIDERATION THAT

WOULD ATTEMPT TO DAMP DOWN THE WHOLE SITUATION. HE SAID THAT IF HIS POSITION HELD HE WOULD EXPECT THE BRITISH TO MAKE A FEW MORE NOISES BUT THAT THE WHOLE AFFAIR WOULD "BLOW OVER IN A FEW DAYS." WE HAD THE DISTINCT IMPRESSION THAT THE AFFAIR CAUGHT DONLON BY SURPRISE. HE SAID THAT HIS DRAFT STATEMENT WOULD SHOW THAT LYNCH SAID NOTHING NEW, BUT MERELY RESTATED OLD AND KNOWN POSITIONS. WE QUERIED ABOUT AMNESTY, AND DONLON WENT INTO A LONG EXPLANATION ABOUT HOW MUCH LYNCH HAD QUALIFIED THE STATEMENT, AND THAT THE REMARKS WERE SO HYPOTHETICAL AS TO BE MEANINGLESS. HE SAID THAT LYNCH HAD NEVER BEEN ASKED ABOUT AMNESTY BEFORE, AND HE WAS JUST THINKING OUT LOUD ABOUT FUTURE, HYPOTHETICAL SITUATIONS. MOST WARS HAD BEEN FOLLOWED BY AMNESTIES--IT IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE TO CONTEMPLATE HERE--THOUGH LYNCH DID IMPLY THAT THOSE WHO HAD BROKEN THE "ORDINARY LAW OF THE LAND" WOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED. IN ANY EVENT, DONLON SAID, THESE REMARKS COULD HARDLY ENCOURAGE THE IRA, AND IT WAS HYPOCRITICAL OF A GOVERNMENT THAT HAD REALLY ENCOURAGED THE IRA BY HOLDING TALKS WITH THEM ("ON THREE SEPARATE OCCASIONS--WE CAN DOCUMENT IT IF NECESSARY") TO COMPLAIN.

3. COMMENT: DUBLIN'S 70 TRANSMITS THE TEXT OF LYNCH'S REMARKS. IT APPEARS THAT LYNCH DID GO BEYOND PREVIOUS REAMRKS ON THE DECLARATION OF INTENT TO WITHDRAW AT LEAST TO THE EXTENT THAT, ALTHOUGH IT HAS BEEN FIANNA FAIL POLICY FOR SOME TIME, LYNCH HAS AVOIDED PUBLICLY USING THIS PLANK, INSOFAR AS WE ARE AWARE, SINCE TAKING OFFICE. REGARDING THE AMNESTY COMMENT, IT IS CONFIDENTIAL

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OBVIOUS THAT, SINCE THE SUBJECT HAD NOT ARISEN BEFORE, LYNCH WOULD HAVE DONE BETTER TO SIDE STEP THE ISSUE. WE SUSPECT HE TRIED TO DO JUST THAT BY QUALIFYING IT AWAY. BECAUSE OF DONLON'S REACTION, AND BECAUSE FOREIGN MINISTER O'KENNEDY GAVE NO HINT OF THIS SEEMING CHANGE OF POLICY IN HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH SECRETARY VANCE THE DAY BEFORE THE LYNCH INTERVIEW (JANUARY 7) , IT APPEARS UNLIKELY THAT THIS WAS A CALCULATED, TIMED MANOEUVRE TO GAIN SOME POLITICAL END. SINCE THE INTERVIEW WAS RELUCTANTLY AGREED TO BY LYNCH AFTER MUCH BADGERING BY THE PRODUCER, MIKE BURNS, THE TIMING SIMPLY SEEMS TO BE A COINCIDENCE. PERHAPS LYNCH HAD BEEN CONTEMPLATING THESE POINTS FOR SOME TIME AND SOMEWHAT INADVERTENTLY LET THEM OUT AT THE PRODDING OF A SHREWD INTERVIEWER. SINCE EVERYONE EXPECTED THE MASON TALKS TO BREAK DOWN IT WOULD HAVE SEEMED MUCH BETTER FOR LYNCH TO WAIT UNTIL AFTER THE TALKS DID BREAK DOWN. IT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN DIFFICULT TO PREDICT THAT SUCH A LYNCH STATEMENT AT SUCH A TIME WOULD BE USED AS AN EXCUSE FOR THE UNIONISTS TO BACK OUT.

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4. HOWEVER INADVERTENT, AND PERHAPS MALADROIT THE REMARKS MIGHT HAVE BEEN, LYNCH AND THE GOI ARE NOT LIKELY TO RETREAT FROM THEM. THUS, FOR GOOD OR ILL, THIS COMPLICATED TRICORNER SITUATION SEEMS TO HAVE ENTERED A SLIGHTLY NEW DIMENSION. WHAT IT WILL LEAD TO IS DIFFICULT TO ESTIMATE AT THIS TIME. THE INITIAL MASON REMARKS WERE STIFF ENOUGH TO INSURE THAT LYNCH WILL HAVE SOLID PUBLIC BACKING HERE. THE TWO DAILY PAPERS WHICH EDITORIALIZED ON THE AFFAIR TODAY STRONGLY BACKED LYNCH. ONE PARLIAMENTARY BACKBENCHER, A SHREWD POLITICIAN, TOLD US THAT HE BELIEVED GARRET FITZGERALD'S ATTACK ON LYNCH IN THIS ISSUE WAS "THE BIGGEST POLITICAL MISTAKE OF FITZGERALD'S CAREER."

5. WE HAVE JUST BEEN INFORMED THAT LYNCH WILL MAKE A STATEMENT LATER THIS EVENING WHICH WILL BE TRANSMITTED SEPTTEL.SHANNON

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